

## A POETICAL PLACE: T.G.HAKE AND T. WATTS-DUNTON AT KELMSCOTT

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In 1890 W. Earl Hodgson edited and published a volume of poems by Thomas Gordon Hake called *The New Day*. In his Preface, Hodgson drew attention to the friendship between Dr. Hake and Dante Gabriel Rossetti during what he refers to as “the Kelmscott and Bognor periods” of Rossetti’s life, “of which no record has been attempted by his biographers” (Hodgson xxv). Hodgson went on to say – rightly, as it has turned out – that “Kelmscott Manor, an Elizabethan house in Oxfordshire for several years in the joint occupancy of Rossetti and the author of ‘The Earthly Paradise,’ will become historic” (xxv). Some of Rossetti’s “finest poems” are said to have been written at this period, “in the meadows and by the riverside,” and Kelmscott is fairly said to have provided “the ‘Holmscote’ of Rossetti’s beautiful lyric ‘Down Stream’” (xxvi). Hodgson added that Kelmscott was also “the scene of the most charming sketches in Dr. Hake’s volume entitled ‘New Symbols,’” and went on to quote two quatrains. He also describes Kelmscott as “the scene of Mr. Watts’ well-known poem ‘Foreshadowings,’ a unique sonnet with a refrain which Rossetti was never tired of quoting” (xxvi-vii). Finally, Hodgson drew attention to the first three sonnets in the volume he was introducing as those which “deal with Kelmscott Manor” (xxviii). In a contemporaneous article on Rossetti in *The Athenaeum*, Theodore Watts-Dunton referred to “the superb work produced by Rossetti during his long retirement at Kelmscott Manor – that period never before recorded, which has at this very moment been brought into prominence by his friend Dr. Hake’s sonnet-sequence ‘The New Day,’ just published” (Watts-Dunton, *Old Familiar Faces* 89). He went on to quote the second sonnet from that sequence – “O, happy days with him who once so loved us!” – as “testimony” to the happiness of that period for Rossetti (89).